DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 885 CS 209 967

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TITLE Gender as an Organizing Force in the World of Mass-Circulation Magazines. Report from the Project on a Social History of the American Reading Public, 1880-1980. Program Report 86-4.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Center for Education Research, Madison.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.; Spencer Foundation, Chicago, Ill.
PUB DATE Apr 86
GRANT NIE-G-84-0008
NOTE 26p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Females; *Periodicals; *Sex Role; Social Environment; Social History; Social Indicators; Social Influences; Sociocultural Patterns; *Traditionalism; *Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS Journalism History; *Womens Magazines

ABSTRACT

Considering gender as an organizing force in the world of magazines is productive both because it allows historians to organize nineteenth and twentieth century magazines according to focus and because examining the relationship between gender targeting and actual audience response can reveal the validity of magazine makers' gender-role assumptions and expectations. The two major themes that emerge from this consideration involve the relationship between advertising and gender segmentation in magazine production and the relationship between gender-segmented magazine production and audience response. From the beginning of mass circulation magazine production, the desire to reach large numbers of women across the nation led advertisers to support the creation of separate magazines for women. Magazine producers used the cultural concept of separate spheres as the rationale for creating gender-targeted magazines. Men's magazines have been more numerous, more specifically focused, and less stable than women's magazines because men were not recognized as major consumers until the 1940s, when magazines began to rely more heavily on advertising. But men's magazines have remained more content specific than women's magazines. The twentieth century magazine industry still features gender marketing along traditional lines and enough audience support exists to warrant continued segmentation. Sex role broadening may affect the magazine industry in the future. (SRT)

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Program Report 86-4

GENDER AS AN ORGANIZING FORCE IN THE WORLD OF MASS-CIRCULATION MAGAZINES

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Report from the Project on a Social History of the American Reading Public, 1880-1980

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April 1986

CS 209967

A report for the project, A Social History of the American Reading Public, Carl Kaestle, Director. Supported by the Spencer Foundation and by the National Institute of Education (Grant No. NIE-G-84-0008), through the Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

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In 1980, four of the top ten circulating magazines in the United States were women's magazines, including the Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's (See Appendix). The same two titles appear in the top ten magazines of 1920; indeed, women's magazines have consistently been listed among the top ten circulating magazines in the twentieth century. While the institution of women's magazines is largely taken for granted in American culture, this longevity and consistent popularity must be accounted for in the face of changing mores and values. But analyzing this segment of the magazine market is not enough; gender has played an important role in the organization of the entire mass-circulation magazine market, and women's magazines are not the only gender-focused publications in the magazine world. A close look at this world reveals magazines intended specifically for women, magazines targeted for a male audience, and magazines designed to reach both groups. When the relationship of gender to mass-circulation magazines is considered, the scholar must ask the following: Why have women's magazines remained so popular? Why are there no long-lived, general, men's publications to parallel women's magazines? What is a man's magazine? Are all mass-circulation magazines gender-targeted? If not, which ones are and are not, and why?

Historians of magazines have outlined the contours of the world of mass-circulation magazines, but few have applied rigorous analytical concepts to their studies.[1] This study seeks to apply such rigor by analyzing the world of mass-circulation magazines in terms of gender.[2] Considering gender as an organizing force in the world of magazines is productive in two ways: First, it allows the historian to give some order to the vast world of magazines; second, examining the relationship between attempts at gender-targeting and actual audience response can reveal the validity of magazine makers' gender-role assumptions and therefore, indirectly, some features of the gender-role expectations of the magazine audience. This study seeks to illuminate the text-reader relationship at the gross level of the mass-circulation magazine market. In other words, the study focuses on some of the publications that magazine publishers produced and that audiences did or did not support at different points in history. This analysis does not feature treatment of the variables of class or race; the magazines analyzed are middle-class magazines chosen because their circulations consistently have been among the highest for American magazines. Presented here is an exploration of middle-class culture, an exploration based on the assumption that magazines both reflect and shape culture.[3]

Social and cultural historians have begun to outline gender-role descriptions for the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] While these schemes are still rough, there are enough details to provide a backdrop to the study of magazines. A more serious drawback of most gender studies is that they treat only one sex at a time. An attempt has been made here to combine male and female gender schemes in order to characterize more accurately gender-role prescriptions in various

periods. For this study, a set of dominant notions about sex roles has been identified for each of several ten- to twenty-year blocks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While sex roles have remained remarkably stable since the nineteenth century, important variations have manifested themselves over the years, and although no one set of cultural concepts can ever be all-inclusive, it is helpful to begin with some sense of prominent cultural prescriptions. Tensions as well as affinities between these dominant concepts and developments in the magazine world will be carefully noted. Several magazines of particular importance to each period will be discussed in the context of then-current gender-role prescriptions.

In the 1890s, when mass circulation magazine production really began, publishers and editors viewed female and male audiences very differently. Magazines for women originally were conceived largely as vehicles for advertising, while magazines for men were conceived primarily as conveyors of special content matter such as hunting information or business news. Magazines for men carried advertising, but a publication like Field and Stream carried much less advertising than a woman's magazine like the Ladies' Home Journal. General male-oriented magazines like the Saturday Evening Post eventually carried more advertising than Field and Stream, but the range of advertising was narrower than that found in women's magazines. Advertisers, and, in turn, magazine producers, viewed women as the culture's primary and major consumers, and this view shaped the magazine world well into the twentieth century. It was not until the end of World War II that men were viewed as major consumers in their own right; magazine publishers then began to produce magazines whose commercial, consumer orientation paralleled the much earlier-established women's magazines. This gender-segmentation in the world of magazines produced a few remarkably long-lived general women's magazines that have relied heavily on advertising, and a diversity of magazines with specific content-related orientations intended for men.

1890-1919

Gender relations in the 1890s were dominated by the concept of separate spheres, but urbanization, increasing educational opportunities, and middle-class professionalization were bringing pressure to bear upon dominant sphere concepts. These concepts had long relegated men to the role of provider and citizen, and women to the role of domestic manager and moralist. Early nineteenth-century industrialization had intensified role separation, with men removed from the home by factory and office work, and women even more solely responsible for the welfare of the family within the confines of the home. Women's sphere was more discretely circumscribed than the male sphere, but it began to expand by the end of the nineteenth century. Education became increasingly available, and urbanization made it possible for more women to organize in groups. At the same time, the

male role in some ways had contracted, since the father had become almost a symbolic figurehead of the family and his role had not expanded significantly in the public realm.[5]

The late nineteenth century therefore saw the intensification of separate male and female cultures, featuring social clubs and reform activities for women, and sports, clubs and military activities for men.[6] Conditions in these years facilitated the development of the nation's first mass-circulation magazines. The story of the Curtis magazines in the 1890s illustrates nicely the convergence of sphere concepts with the demand for national markets, as well as the role magazine publishers and editors played in this meeting.

Cyrus Curtis was a Maine Yankee with a strong interest in publishing and an even stronger interest in advertising. With a partner, he began in 1879 a newspaper called The Tribune and the Farmer, and in the early 1880s, Curtis added a woman's page to the paper. Curtis's wife, Louisa Knapp Curtis, soon took full responsibility for the page and under her editorship it grew into a supplement which became more popular than the rest of the paper. In 1883, Curtis sold The Tribune and the Farmer to his partner, retaining the supplement, and in December of 1883, the first independent issue of the Ladies' Home Journal appeared.[7] Louisa Curtis edited the Ladies' Home Journal for five years, and with her husband built its circulation to half a million, but in 1888 she left the editorship to spend more time mothering her daughter. The Curtises hired Edward Bok, a Dutch immigrant who had earlier syndicated a newspaper supplement for women, to edit the Journal.

The key to this new magazine was advertising. The case of the Ladies' Home Journal demonstrates that the late nineteenth-century view of women as the culture's primary consumers led to the institution of women's sheets or supplements in newspapers of the 1880s.[8] Edward Bok wrote later that, "it was a productive field, since, as woman was the purchasing power, it would benefit the newspaper enormously in its advertising if it could offer a feminine clientele."[9] The potential for national markets made a woman's consumer magazine the next logical development, and Cyrus Curtis was the right man to promote the idea. Curtis not only convinced advertisers of the importance of national markets, the value of advertising directed to women, and the value of the advertising copy he wrote; he also advertised his own new magazine heavily in newspapers through the dominant agency of the time, N. W. Ayer. By 1890, several prominent women's magazines had followed the Journal, including McCall's, Good Housekeeping, and the Woman's Home Companion. Much of what could be advertised in this era, including food, clothing, cleaning products, housewares, books and medicine, was being advertised primarily to women in these magazines.

The Journal was highly successful; the targeted audience responded quickly and in great numbers. What were the specific

reasons for its success? The Ladies' Home Journal was a cheap, modern successor to the more expensive ladies' magazines and rougher newspaper sheets for women of the earlier nineteenth century. Since women had supported these earlier publications, it is not surprising that they bought the Journal. Also, the formula of women's magazines like the Journal was a direct outgrowth of women's sphere, combining domestic features and articles, and short stories focusing on romance. And women in the 1890s were comfortable with both the notion of sphere and the women's magazine formula. In the short run, magazines like the Journal also helped to broaden women's sphere by catering to the woman's role as consumer and moving her activity outward from the home to include shopping.[10] The Ladies' Home Journal suited the times well, with its features on cooking, sewing, and cleaning, advice columns about raising children, articles and stories about human relations, and substantial advertising. The early general fit between audience and magazine values is illustrated by the fact that later, when Bok crusaded against ignorance about venereal disease in the pages of the Journal, thousands of women responded to this public discussion of a scandalous subject by cancelling their subscriptions.[11] The Journal of the late nineteenth century went to no such extremes, and middle-class women made it a great success.

The second magazine in the Curtis stable was the Saturday Evening Post. Curtis bought the Post in 1897 as a potential complement to the Journal. In keeping with the cultural perception of the male role, the Post was more focused than the Journal, dealing mostly with business and political news. Also in contrast to the Journal, the Post never was viewed primarily as a vehicle for advertising, mainly because men as a group were not regarded as a prime target for advertising. Once men began to buy the Post, Curtis convinced himself--and then advertisers--that ads in the Post could be profitable, and the magazine eventually did carry advertising. The Journal's content, therefore, featuring a broad range of topics corresponding to elements of the female sphere, was produced in order to carry advertising to women, while the Post's eventual use of advertising made it possible for the magazine to carry its more specific, focused message to men.

The pattern of a men's magazine produced to complement an existing women's magazine is significant; the American Magazine and Vanity Fair, which appeared in the early twentieth century, were men's magazines similarly conceived. Two forces seem to be in operation here. At one level, dominant gender role concepts are being attended to: Women are consumers and have general interests, while men do not purchase to the same extent as women and have more specific interests. But at the gross level of markets, another element is important. In each of these three significant cases, the particular women's magazine existed first: The Post complemented the Journal; the American Magazine; the Woman's Home Companion; and Vanity Fair was a complement to Vogue. Thus women's magazines were

the earlier, "safer" product of publishing companies, and it was only after their success that publishers ventured into the less predictable world of magazines for men. The publishers' hesitation was warranted; the Post's success was much slower in coming than the Journal's had been, with the Post relying on revenues from the Journal for several years before becoming financially independent. The Post did come to dominate magazine circulations and advertising revenues by the 1920s, but like the American Magazine and Vanity Fair, it would later die in the face of competition from radio and television.[12]

Thus an important pattern in the magazine world was set by the early twentieth century: Publishing a magazine for women was a relatively simple proposition, with advertising providing the base of the magazine and content corresponding to sphere concepts. Publishing men's magazines was more complicated and risky, however. The view of men as consumers was less clear, and men's interests in politics, outdoor activities, and various kinds of work were less easily and neatly "packaged" in a single magazine. Early in its history, therefore, the mass-circulation magazine industry produced a group of women's magazines that had a clear and long-lasting identity, and a more diverse and unstable group of men's magazines.

1920-1929

In an elegant essay on formula in popular culture, David Nord proposes a "risk theory" to describe the relationship between popular media values and reader values. The product, be it movie or magazine, radio or television program, represents a compromise between the values and money-making goal of the producer, and the values and desires of readers, listeners or viewers.[13] Producers therefore will try to maximize profits by appealing to as broad a group of readers as possible, and readers will buy if their values and tastes are reasonably well-addressed. This subtle improvement on reflection theories and simple market theories can be of some assistance when the values of producer and reader match well enough to result in a magazine which succeeds in the way the producer envisions; therefore, as noted earlier, the Ladies' Home Journal must not have violated middle-class women's values and desires since it rapidly became popular with that group, which was just the one Curtis and Bok wanted to reach. But it is still difficult to say anything specific about readers' values in this case. Nord's "risk theory" is more revealing when applied to a case where there is a disjunction between the producer's intended audience and the group which actually reads the magazine. This disjunction is especially interesting in a case where the audience is broader than the producer had envisioned.

The 1920s produced two such cases, and the key to the disjunction in each case was gender. The Reader's Digest was established in 1922 to appeal primarily to women; and Time Magazine

was founded in 1923 as a news magazine for men. Within several years, both magazines had established broad audiences because men were reading the Digest and women were reading Time. Placing the establishment of these two important magazines in the context of gender-role developments will help illuminate possible reasons for the disjunction between producer intentions and audience response.

World War I seems to have served as a cathartic experience for middle-class men who had earlier experienced role strain. Those not going to war were able to glorify war heroes and to put to rest fears about effeminacy. Those who did go were more cynical about the war as a "crucible of masculinity," many viewing the violence as a reflection of the unnecessarily harsh traits of the male character. Therefore, as Elizabeth and Joseph Pleck write, after the war "men hung up their rifles and put away their medals in favor of a hip flask and a ukelele."[14] Women by 1920 seemed to have shifted their attention away from political reform to more economic concerns, and society began not only to accept but to expect young middle-class women to work before marriage. Coeducational colleges and universities became the norm rather than the exception, and this generation's youth "rebelled" by exercising new social freedoms, such as drinking and smoking.

An important result of these developments is that men and women began spending more time together. Dating became the most common form of socializing among young people, and sex was sanctioned as a legitimate marital activity aside from its procreative function. The dominant gender ethos for men in this period was "companionate providing," while for women it was primarily that of "wife/companion."[15] In this comparatively affluent time, standards of consumption for the white, middle-class family rose and thus middle-class men were expected to "provide" more, but they also were expected to spend time away from work with their wives. The notion that children can be a hindrance to a husband-wife relationship first emerged in these years, and women were urged to regard their role as wife as more important than their role as mother. It was toward the end of this period that advertisements for cosmetics first outnumbered the advertisements for food in the Ladies Home Journal.[16]

Demonstrating the productivity that could be part of a companionate relationship, a young couple named Dewitt and Lila Acheson Wallace in the 1920s developed the idea for a new women's magazine to be called the Reader's Digest. Dewitt originally had conceived the idea of collecting and condensing the best articles from various magazines to form an efficient, convenient source of reading matter. Publishers did not buy the idea, but Dewitt's fiancee, Lila, did; on their wedding day in 1921 the Wallaces worked together to mail thousands of circulars advertising their prospective magazine. With 1,500 charter subscriptions and a pony stable for an office, they produced 5,000 copies of the first issue of the Digest in February, 1922. Articles in the first issue included: "Useful

Points in Judging People" from a book titled Art and Science of Selling; "Is the Stage too Vulgar?" from Theatre Magazine; "The Firefly's Light" from Country Life; "Whatever is New for Women is Wrong" from the Ladies Home Journal; and "Progress in Science" from the Scientific American.[17]

The Wallaces intended their magazine to reach teachers and other professionals, especially "newly enfranchised, newly emancipated women."[18] Mrs. Wallace was listed on the editorial masthead as Lila B. Acheson in order to appeal to such women. The Digest expanded on the established women's magazine formula by adding social and cultural news to stories about people, health and home. The Wallaces seemed to sense quickly, however, that their magazine fit the 1920s emphasis on male/female companionship in a much broader way, and they began to conceive of their audience as both female and male.[19] According to early estimates from Fortune Magazine, the Digest's circulation grew rapidly, and by 1940 the magazine was the most widely read magazine in the country.[20] Women and men alike seemed to be interested in fireflies and in judging people, and they made the Digest one of the most extraordinarily successful of all American magazines. The problem of how to handle advertising for a dual-gender audience did not arise, for the Digest carried no advertising at all until 1955.

Time was also a magazine especially suited to its era, fitting its time to an even greater extent than its founders estimated. Henry Luce and Briton Hadden were prep-school classmates who enjoyed a productive partnership until Hadden's untimely death in 1926. They first talked about producing a magazine when they were students at Yale, and after service in World War I--neither saw combat--and brief newspaper stints, they decided to establish their own publication. The war had shown Luce and Hadden two things that influenced the magazine they eventually produced: First, most people were sadly ignorant about current events, even those in military service who were supposed to keep abreast of important developments; and second, the news people did get was often confusing or even contradictory.[21] By 1923, the two men had put together a magazine prospectus built on the notion that "people are uninformed because no publication has adapted itself to the time which busy men are able to spend on simply keeping informed."[22] The magazine consisted of brief, unsigned stories that packaged the news in a homogeneous and entertaining way. The optimism and brevity of the magazine's features fit the twenties perfectly, and, surprisingly, it seemed to suit women as well as men. Within a few years, Time described its audience as consisting primarily of college graduates, with no mention of gender, and by the 1940s a trade advertisement in Fortune boasted that "not only 1,800,000 men, but 1,500,000 women are reading Time each week."[23]

In sum, neither the female-market orientation of the Digest's editors nor the male targeting of Time's founders persisted once the magazines hit the stands. Several reasons for the disjunction

between intended and actual audience in the cases of the Reader's Digest and Time appear to be significant. The times were right for gender-inclusive magazines; women seemed to be ready to read the news and men to read about medical developments, entertainers, and family life. Also, given the importance of gender-targeted advertising and its role in the rise of gender-specific magazines, it is important to note that advertising played a less central role in the early years of both the Digest and Time than it had in the development of the Curtis magazines and of most other mass-circulation magazines. The Digest refused advertising until 1955, and Time got by with less advertising than most until its circulation was well-established.[24] This factor probably left the identity of each magazine more open, and allowed readers more of a role in establishing the identity of each as a gender-inclusive magazine. Thus the combination of the male-female companionship ethos of the 1920s, a de-emphasis on advertising, and their particular formulae led to very large audiences for Time and the Reader's Digest, audiences eventually so large that even the publishers were surprised.

1930-1945

The special circumstances of the 1920s that favored the rise of gender-inclusive magazines were interrupted by the complicated years of the Depression and of World War II. Cultural historians interested in male roles describe the period as a throwback to the strenuous life of the 1890s, due first to the economic pressure of the Depression and then to the demand for men to serve as soldiers during the war. For women as well, during the Depression at least, the major gender-role concept seems to have been the good wife/mother combination of the 1890s. In contrast, during the war, woman's role broadened significantly with the entry of thousands of women into factory and service work to replace the soldiering men. Women filled the provider role well, and the rhetoric of the day was supportive and praising of their work. But, if attitudes ever actually changed in this period, the change was a temporary one; when men returned from the war, women were expected to quit their jobs and go back to full-time homemaking. In reality, a substantial number of women remained in the work force, and the experience of these women helped to lay the groundwork for the later emergence of the feminist movement.[25] In 1945, however, women were again viewed much as they had been in the 1890s, and the companionship ethos of the 1920s was de-emphasized. The traumatic events of these decades seemed to intensify cultural notions of the differences rather than similarities between female and male roles.

The magazine world in part reflects this return to gender differentiation after 1930, but in part it does not. The year 1936 saw the rise of a spectacularly successful picture magazine, Life. In contrast to most magazines appearing in the 1930s, Life was deliberately gender-inclusive.[26] That the magazine was so successful

at a time when separate gender cultures were being reasserted is a testament to its attractive formula. Life combined the breadth of subjects and simplicity of the Reader's Digest with its own important new element, photographs. The result was a compelling magazine with something for everyone, and everyone seemed to buy it.

But a much broader trend during the Depression and war years was the emphasis on separate men's and women's magazines, this time with some new twists on the magazines of the 1890s. Publishers and editors discovered the male consumer. The fashion and literary men's magazine, Esquire, first appeared in 1933, while the war years saw a boom in cheaper men's magazines like True. Women's magazines founded in the 1880s and 1890s retained their popularity through the 1930s and 1940s, but a refinement in marketing produced a whole new genre for women--the grocery store magazine.

The forerunner to Esquire was a magazine called Apparel Arts, a clothing-trade publication. A fashion illustrator first suggested the idea of a more consumer-oriented publication to David Smart and Arnold Gingrich, Apparel Arts's publisher and editor, respectively. The Apparel Arts's staff was interested, but immediately faced the challenge of breaking new ground in the world of magazines. As Gingrich writes, "Although [we] had sold hundreds of men's fashion booklets to stores, to be given away free, [we] couldn't imagine that men would ever part with their own money for a male counterpart of Vogue or Harper's Bazaar."[27] In response, the staff scrambled to make the fashion magazine "more and more hair-chested," with features on manly activities like sports and hunting.

In October of 1933, Esquire took its place in the world of magazines as a fifty-cent, upper-class men's magazine. Experts predicted that no more than 25,000 copies of such an expensive publication would be sold. A disjunction emerges once again between publisher/editor expectations and audience behavior: Viewing the clothing-store outlet as more appropriate to their magazine than the newsstand, Smart and Gingrich placed 100,000 copies of the first issue in clothing stores, and 5,000 copies on newsstands. Popular demand was so great for the magazine that they had to retrieve all but 5,000 copies from stores. Esquire was distributed through newsstands subsequently, and switched from quarterly to monthly publication in January, 1934.[28] Men were, it seemed, ready to buy a fashion and literary magazine, and advertisers were very ready to cater to an upper-class male audience.

Men's adventure magazines reflected a much more conscious assessment of changes in gender roles, and a more confident attempt to reach a new male market. Henry Steeger, publisher of Argosy, explained this new approach:

> Women acquired the vote, they went into drinking places and smoked cigarettes in public, and there was quite an emphasis on the emergence of equality for the female. . . By contrast with this the American male "put on trousers again" at the end of World War II. Prior to that time, women had been catalogued as the operators of the family pursestrings and the purchasers of practically all commodities. After that time, new buying pursuits were adopted by the male and it began to be recognized by the advertising agencies all over that the male was an individual to be reckoned with in the purchase of all types of products. . . .[29]

This conscious and confident exploitation of a new market is reminiscent of the late nineteenth century and the rise of women's magazines. Fifty years after recognizing the importance of the female market, magazine makers and advertisers began to view men as consumers in their own right. While the phenomenal growth of these adventure magazines eventually levelled off, the pattern of male-focused and female-focused marketing and advertising continues to this day.

In 1940, three of the top five circulating magazines in the nation were women's magazines, with the familiar titles of the Woman's Home Companion, the Ladies' Home Journal, and McCall's. Each magazine had undergone some editorial changes, but the women's magazine formula remained largely unchanged. During the Depression a new variation on the old theme emerged: Family Circle, first published in 1932, and Woman's Day, appearing in 1936, were cheap magazines geared for women and sold only in grocery stores. This genre soon raised the quality of its features to become comparable to traditional women's magazines, but it represented the height of commercialism in women's reading matter. Consisting largely of advertisements and consumption-oriented features, and capitalizing on the buying mood of the woman shopping for groceries, the phenomenon is a remarkable example of reading matter as a commodity. This hardly made such magazines less popular, however. Women bought them then and their popularity has steadily increased, with Family Circle and Woman's Day ranking fifth and sixth, respectively, on the 1980 magazine circulation list.

Therefore, while the Depression and war years saw the rise of Life, a very successful gender-inclusive magazine, the more important story of these years is one of gender separation. The pattern of gender-targeted advertising that consumers now take for granted became more pronounced in these years with the move toward catering to male consumers, and magazines became even more rigidly separated by gender.

1945-1960

The late forties saw a return to a more settled way of life. Suburbs expanded and families grew rapidly. Some historians identify this as a period largely like the 1920s in terms of gender roles, with its emphasis on companionship and on high standards for providing for a family. According to these historians, the separate culture emphasis of the war years faded, and men and women began spending more time together again.[30]

Peter Filene agrees with this evaluation of the culture but suggests that there also were present significant currents of tension. He suggests that the emphasis on love-based relationships of the 1950s called for a maturity that many people did not possess, and that there was a significant gap between cultural ideals and reality in this period. Women were treated in the media largely as sex objects. Men complained about work but were often happier at the office than they were at home. Children knew that their father was the breadwinner, but they often did not know what he did for a living. Women felt isolated in the suburbs, and many couples felt the stress that commuting can cause.[31] Significant gender-role tensions seemed to bubble beneath the surface of couple-centered happiness.

Developments at McCall's Magazine and Redbook illustrate the tensions of the 1950s well. The McCall's Corporation bought Redbook in 1929 and made it a general interest monthly featuring light fiction for men and women. The magazine had a circulation of one million by 1936, but still trailed its major competitors, American Magazine and Cosmopolitan. In 1948, Redbook sought a more narrow audience. Reflecting the revived emphasis on companionship, Redbook aimed itself at young married couples; in 1951, it introduced its new title, Redbook, the Magazine for Young Adults. The change worked for a time, and in 1950 the magazine's circulation reached two million.[32] But by the mid-1960's, Redbook had become the "Magazine for Young Women," having shifted to the feature-fiction format of the other women's magazines.

McCall's Magazine represents an even stronger attempt to make the companionship concept work for magazines. Otis Wiese went to McCall's as editor in 1928 at the age of twenty-three. Under him the magazine became one of the top three women's magazines in the country, but in 1945, Wiese announced a fundamental change in policy. The magazine would move from being targeted exclusively at women to being directed to women and their families. According to Theodore Peterson, "the new editorial pitch was based on what Wiese called 'togetherness'--a family's living not as isolated members but as a unit sharing experience."[33] Although "togetherness" seemed to be the perfect expression of the fifties ethos, it failed as a device to attract male readers. McCall's circulation remained stable but did not increase, and its readership did not appear to change; Wiese left

in 1958 in a dispute over new company policies; and Herbert Mayes in the early 1960s, reverting to earlier emphases, made McCall's into the top-selling women's magazine.

The McCall's and Redbook experiences do not mean that gender-inclusive magazines could not succeed in the 1950s: Reader's Digest and Life were still going strong, and magazines like Better Homes and Gardens, with its mix of indoor- and outdoor-related features, successfully attracted both male and female readers. But the failure of McCall's and Redbook to do the same seems to suggest that gender-inclusiveness could only go so far. The narrower range of domestic fiction and features that characterized both of these magazines in the 1940s and '50s was either identified too closely with women's magazines to appeal to men, or just did not interest men enough to get them to read the magazine.

The story of the Saturday Evening Post in these years is a similar one. The Post dominated mass-circulation magazines until the 1940s, when editor George Horace Lorimer's opposition to the New Deal began to date the magazine. The Post had gradually come to be viewed primarily as a family magazine, with some fiction and features geared for women. Beginning in late 1942, the effort to appeal to women as well as to men became more conscious, but, as with McCall's and Redbook, the effort to cross the gender barrier in a significant way was in the main unsuccessful. By 1950 the Post was in big trouble, and it limped through the 1950s only to collapse in the 1960s.[34]

Given the cases cited above, it is not surprising that the trend toward establishing separate, specialized magazines for men continued. Sports Illustrated hit the newsstands in 1954, rapidly becoming one of the most popular magazines available for men. More significant, however, was the appearance in 1952 of Playboy, Hugh Hefner's "bible of the beleaguered male." Hefner had always wanted to publish a magazine for men, and he correctly sensed a market for a new men's magazine in the early 1950s. He explained his view of the Playboy place in the men's magazine market in Playboy's twenty-fifth anniversary issue:

> The most popular men's magazines of the time were the outdoor-adventure books--True, Argosy and the like. They had a hairy-chested editorial emphasis with articles on hunting, fishing, chasing the Abominable Snowman over Tibetan mountaintops . . . Esquire had changed its editorial emphasis after the War, eliminating most of the lighter material--the girls, cartoons and humor. So the field was wide open for the sort of magazine I had in mind. . . .[35]

While Hefner aspired to some quality for his magazine, he relied from the beginning on sex to sell Playboy. And sell it did; the first issue, undated because Hefner did not know how long it would sit on newsstands, quickly sold 53,000 copies. By the end of the year, the

magazine was selling 175,000 copies; by 1963, its circulation was over one million; by 1980, it ranked number eleven on the magazine list with a circulation of over five-and-a-half million.[36]

Playboy certainly fit the tensions of its time: women as sex objects, lack of maturity, office more comfortable than the home, distance between fathers and children. Some scholars suggest, however, that Playboy did little to change actual lifestyles.[37] While it certainly reinforced sexist stereotypes, the more potent message of Playboy was a continuation of the theme carried in the 1940s magazines like Esquire and True: consume. Hefner recognized the importance of advertising to his magazine early on, so much so that he borrowed funds to run the magazine until 1954, carrying no advertising until his circulation was high enough to attract the kind of advertising he wanted. Playboy's advertisements as much as anything else set it apart from earlier "girlie" magazines. Instead of muscle creams and cheap sex aids, Playboy featured advertisements for liquor, cigarettes, clothing, cars, stereos, soaps and colognes, and other "men's furnishings." At least for the average reader, this message seems to have been even more potent than the messages related to sexual lifestyle.[38]

This discussion is certainly not meant to defend or excuse the Playboy message, but it is important to avoid overemphasizing the impact that magazines have on their readers. In The Hearts of Men, Barbara Ehrenreich asserts that Playboy helped to precipitate a "flight from commitment" on the part of middle-class men over the last three-and-a-half decades. It is true that the largest part of Playboy's audience consists of male university and college students, and that the image of women and of sex promoted by Playboy runs counter to mature, respectful and responsible sexual relationships.[39] But to suggest that the Playboy lifestyle has been adopted by thousands of American men is a gross exaggeration. Marriage statistics alone undermine Ehreneich's thesis. That marriage rates have remained stable and even increased during the height of Playboy's popularity suggests that the message to "avoid marriage," so prominent in the magazine, falls mostly on deaf ears. Ehrenreich's argument illustrates the danger of assuming that magazine makers' values reflect or strongly influence the values and behavior of magazine readers.[40]

1960-1980

Historians have yet to identify dominant gender-role prescriptions for the most recent twenty years, but they agree that a major trend seems to be toward broadening both female and male roles, with many more women working outside of the home, and men sharing more household and childrearing duties. It is not clear just how much the magazine world reflects this trend; specialized and diverse publications for men are still the norm, and the general women's

magazines popular throughout the twentieth century are still among the top circulating magazines in the country. These facts suggest the continuation of patterns that have characterized the mass circulation magazine market through most of its history.

But two magazines for women appearing between 1960 and 1980 indicate some change. In 1965, Helen Gurley Brown became editor of Cosmopolitan Magazine, making it a less pornographic, woman's version of Playboy. Although its content and philosophy are very different, Ms. Magazine, which first appeared in 1972, also illustrates a new broadening of magazines geared for middle-class women.

Cosmopolitan, according to its own description, is "edited for young women, married and single, interested in self-improvement, careers, clothes, beauty, travel, entertainment and the arts . . . with special emphasis on the world outside the home. It is edited to help young women realize the very best of themselves."[41] Much of Cosmopolitan's philosophy about gender roles is, of course, very traditional. Women, it appears, are valued in terms of their ability to "catch" a man, and pursuing men requires the traditional tools of beauty, charm and fashion. But Cosmopolitan's emphasis on career and openness about sex at least provides something of an alternative to the traditional women's magazine formula.[42]

Ms. represents an even clearer choice. Early in 1970 a group of writers and activists began meeting to discuss a new magazine that might treat changes in women's lives seriously, and that might link women involved in various feminist causes across the country. New York Magazine agreed to sponsor a first issue of the magazine, and in January of 1972, the preview issue hit the newsstands. As did Cosmopolitan, Ms. rejected standard women's magazine fare like recipes and homemaking features. Unlike Cosmopolitan, however, Ms. is a feminist, politically aware publication, making it a more genuine alternative to traditional women's magazines.

Conclusion

Two major themes emerge when considering gender as an organizing force in the world of magazines. The first involves the relationship between advertising and gender segmentation in magazine production, the second the relationship between gender-segmented magazine production and audience response.

The relationship between gender-specific advertising and magazine publication has been a complicated one, and it has had important implications for the magazine publishing industry. The desire to reach large numbers of women across the nation with messages to consume their products led advertisers to support the creation of separate magazines for women. But magazine producers like Cyrus and Louisa Curtis created the women's magazine formula, a

formula that revolved around a view of women as consumers. Magazine producers used the cultural concept of separate spheres as the context for the creation of gender-targeted magazines, and advertisers reinforced that development by buying advertising space in these new publications. Given the importance of advertising in a consumption-oriented society like this one, the result was a magazine formula that has dominated magazines for women for over a century.

The early view of men as less consumption-oriented in the context of more diffuse male sphere concepts produced a very different pattern for men's magazines. Throughout the twentieth century, mass circulation magazines targeted for men have been more numerous, more specifically focused, and less stable than women's magazines. Since the recognition in the 1940s of men as major consumers, men's magazines have relied more heavily on advertising. In spite of this broader use of advertising, however, men's magazines have remained more content-specific than women's magazines, again underscoring the important role that sphere concepts have played in the twentieth-century magazine industry.

Audience response to gender-targeting of markets has been generally reinforcing of the practice. Middle-class women in the 1880s and 1890s responded enthusiastically to the new women's magazine formula, signaling at some level their acceptance of the message to consume. Men supported magazines that did not rely as heavily on advertising, but by the 1940s they also were ready to respond favorably to a more consumption-oriented kind of publication. Of course, gender-targeting has not always worked in just the way magazine producers intended. As noted earlier, both men and women in the 1920s crossed gender lines to support magazines that were targeted for the other sex, and in the case of news magazines like Time, this cross-gender audience seems to have persisted. It is also important to note that there are several popular magazines read by both men and women which seem to be divorced from gender, including T.V. Guide and National Geographic. Magazines like these are less reliant on advertising than are other mass circulation magazines, and therefore, like the Reader's Digest and Time in the 1920s, seem to be less highly gender-identified.

But for the most part the twentieth-century magazine industry story has featured gender-marketing along traditional lines and enough audience support to warrant continued gender segmentation. Will these patterns persist? Will general women's magazines thrive another one hundred years? Will diversity and specificity continue to characterize men's magazines? Or is it possible that the current broadening of sex roles will have an impact on future magazine markets? Whether sex role broadening will affect the magazine industry--and what form any changes might take--remains to be seen.

ENDNOTES

1. The best general history of the magazine is Theodore Peterson's Magazines in the Twentieth Century. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1964; the only real analytical study of American magazines is A. J. Van Zuilen's The Life Cycle of Magazines. The Netherlands, Uithorn: Graduate Press, 1977. An excellent study of British women's magazines, which includes some analysis of recent American women's magazines, is Marjorie Ferguson's Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity. Exeter, New Hampshire: Heineman Educational Books, 1983.

2. Other analytical variables such as class, race, age and religion could and should form the basis of future studies.

3. The attempt here is to help flesh out some of the characteristics of the complex relationship between magazines and their audiences' values and behavior. For an excellent discussion of this relationship see David Paul Nord, "An Economic Perspective on Formula in Popular Culture," Journal of American Culture 3 (Spring 1980), pp. 17-31.

4. See Lois Banner, Women in Modern America: A Brief History. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984; Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family from the Revolution to the Present. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; Peter Filene, Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975; Elizabeth and Joseph Pleck, The American Man. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980; Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present. New York: Basic Books, 1978; Mary Ryan, Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1975; Lois Scharf, To Work and to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1980; and Margaret Gibbons Wilson, The American Woman in Transition: The Urban Influence, 1870-1920. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1979.

5. Rothman, pp. 21-25; 97-106.

6. Pleck and Pleck, pp. 23-28.

7. The Journal was not the only magazine for women in existence in 1883. Godey's Lady's Book and Peterson's Magazine were in publication, but circulations were small and advertising very limited. Competition for the Journal came from other small women's "sheets" and from dress pattern catalogues. James McCall's Queen of Fashion was originally published in 1870; it became McCall's, more of a real magazine, in 1884. Good Housekeeping and the Woman's Home Companion both appeared in

1883. Therefore, by 1883, four magazines existed that would dominate the magazine circulation lists for much of the twentieth century.

8. The view of women as the culture's primary consumers was an important nineteenth-century development, and as such deserves more attention from historians.

9. Edward Bok, The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years Later. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921, p. 105.

10. The Journal and other magazines like it reinforced women's more traditional role, however, by limiting features and stories to topics related to homemaking and the family. While it is an overstatement to call these magazines oppressive to women, it is appropriate to consider them to have discouraged significant changes in women's roles.

11. Bok, pp. 345-351.

12. Peterson,

13. Nord, pp. 24-29.

14. Pleck and Pleck, p. 29.

15. Pleck and Pleck, pp. 28-36.

16. Robert S. Lynd, "Family Members as Consumers." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 160 (March, 1932), p. 91.

17. Wood, James P. Of Lasting Interest: The Story of the Reader's Digest. Garden City, New York: 1967, p. 27.

18. Wood, p. 40.

19. Wood, p. 40.

20. Peterson, p. 232.

21. Busch, Noel. Briton Hadden: A Biography of the Co-Founder of Time. New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1949, p. 35.

22. Busch, p. 60.

23. Peterson, p. 328; Advertisement appearing in Fortune, August 1948, vol. 38, pp. 20-21.

24. Peterson, pp. 233-234, 328; Wood, James P. The Curtis Magazines. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1971, p. 113.

25. Rothman, p. 224.

26. Peterson, pp. 349-350, 352.

27. Gingrich, Arnold. Nothing But People. New York: Crown, 1971, p. 81.

28. Peterson, p. 275.

29. Peterson, pp. 315-317.

30. Pleck and Pleck, pp. 33-36.

31. Filene, pp. 172-183.

32. Peterson, pp. 208-209.

33. Peterson, p. 204.

34. Wood, The Curtis Magazines, pp. 274-275. The Post recently has been reincarnated as a monthly (bimonthly in the summer) by the Saturday Evening Post Society in Indiana.

35. Weyr, Thomas. Reaching for Paradise: The Playboy Vision of America. New York: Times Books, 1978, p. 3.

36. Weyr, p. 14, and Peterson, p. 317.

37. Weyr. pp. 96-98.

38. Weyr, pp. 7-87; 96-98.

39. As Ehrenreich does, I am separating the issue of pornography and its effects on readers from the issue of lifestyle. See Barbara Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984, pp. 42-51.

40. See Ehrenreich, chapter 4, pp. 42-51, especially pp. 43, 46, and 50-51.

41. Wolseley, Raymond. The Changing Magazine: Trends in Readership and Management. New York: Hastings House, 1973, p. 56.

42. Marjorie Ferguson agrees with this assessment of Cosmopolitan as a significant variation on the traditional women's magazine formula. See discussion in Forever Feminine of modern American magazines, especially chapter 4.

APPENDIX

TOP CIRCULATING MAGAZINES, 1900-1980[1]

Magazines Exceeding 250,000 Paid Circulation, 1900[2]

Rank	Magazine	Circulation (thousands)	Established
1.	Ladies' Home Journal	846	1883
2.	Munsey's Magazine	650	1889
3.	Hearthstone	610	1891
4.	Boyce's Monthly	604	1897
5.	Metrop'n and Rural Home	500	1871
6.	Delineator	500	1873
7.	Household Guest	500	1891
8.	Ladies' World	434	1879
9.	Farm Journal	382	1877
10.	McClure's Mag	369	1893
11.	Modern Queen	367	n.d.
12.	Park's Floral Mag	359	n.d.
13.	Modes and Fabrics	356	1890
14.	People's Home Journal	345	1885
15.	Modern Stories	340	1892

Magazines Exceeding 250,000 Paid Circulation, 1920[3]

Rank	Magazine	Circulation (thousands)	Established
1.	Saturday Evening Post	2,021	1728 (Curtis-1897)
2.	Ladies' Home Journal	1,823	1883
3.	Pictorial Review	1,605	1899
4.	Gentlewoman	1,500	1871
5.	McCall's Magazine	1,201	1870
6.	Comfort	1,197	1888
7.	Woman's Home Companion	1,085	1873
8.	Collier's	1,064	1888
9.	American Magazine	1,038	1876
10.	Cosmopolitan	1,021	1886
11.	Woman's World	1,018	1901
12.	Farm Journal	1,016	1877
13.	Needlecraft Magazine	1,004	1909
14.	People's Home Journal	847	1885
15.	Successful Farming	817	1902

[1]Information taken from Ayer's Annual Directory of Newspapers and Magazines. Tabulated by Carl Kaestle.

[2]One million in 1980, controlling for population, would be 346,000 in 1900.

[3]One million in 1980, controlling for population, would be 481,000 in 1920.

Magazines Exceeding 500,000 Paid Circulation, 1940[4]

1.	Woman's Home Companion	3,131	1873
2.	Saturday Evening Post	3,104	1728(!)
3.	Ladies' Home Journal	3,084	1883
4.	McCall's Magazine	2,941	1870
5.	Collier's	2,745	1888
6.	Farm J. & Farmer's Wife	2,442	1877
7.	Life	2,382	1936
8.	Good Housekeeping	2,276	1885
9.	Liberty	2,359	1924
10.	American Magazine	2,189	1876
11.	Country Gentleman	2,048	1831
12.	True Story	2,005	1919
13.	Better Homes & Gardens	1,962	1922
14.	Household Magazine	1,919	1900
15.	Hearst's Inter Cos-politn	1,854	1886

Magazines Exceeding 750,000 Paid Circulation, 1960[5]

Rank	Magazine	Circulation (thousands)	Established
1.	Reader's Digest	12,134	1922
2.	TV Guide	7,028	1953
3.	Life	6,108	1930
4.	Saturday Evening Post	6,005	1728(!)
5.	Ladies' Home Journal	5,755	1883
6.	Look	5,701	1937
7.	McCall's Magazine	5,492	1870
8.	Everywoman's Family Circle	5,121	1932
9.	Better Homes & Gardens	4,799	1922
10.	Good Housekeeping	4,438	1885
11.	Woman's Day	4,147	1937
12.	The American Home	3,500	1928
13.	Farm Journal	3,121	1877
14.	Coronet	3,078	1936
15.	Redbook Magazine	2,809	1903

[4]One million in 1980, controlling for population, would be 598,000 in 1940.

[5]One million in 1980, controlling for population, would be 815,000 in 1960.

Magazines Exceeding 1,000,000 Paid Circulation, 1980

Rank	Magazine	Circulation (thousands)	Established
1.	T.V. Guide	21,548	1953
2.	Reader's Digest	18,094	1922
3.	National Geographic	10,250	1888
4.	Better Homes & Gardens	8,033	1922
5.	Family Circle	7,612	1932
6.	Woman's Day	7,536	1937
7.	Modern Maturity	7,000	1957
8.	McCall's	6,503	1876
9.	The College Game	6,053	1968
10.	Ladies' Home Journal	5,633	1883
11.	Playboy	5,539	1953
12.	Good Housekeeping	5,178	1885
13.	National Enquirer	5,012	1926
14.	Penthouse	4,651	1969
15.	Redbook Magazine	4,451	1903